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Victory Pageant

The Pageant of Light

By
Philip Gross

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Preface

Pageantry or The Civic Drama

For centuries there has been a groping desire for the Community Masque or Civic Drama. It dates back to the early Greek drama, where the Chorus would act as the Voice of the scenes being enacted by groups, either on the stage or in a processional among the spectators.

Our modern pageantry began with the early English Processionals and Christmas Pantomimes, but it is now being developed along rather different lines, both in Europe and America. Prominent authors in England and here, have written beautiful examples of the Pageant and Masque, in the production of which set stages are used, in some cases exclusively, although in others, the processional is still clung to as an addition to the acts on the stage.

But, during the years of 1917 and 1918, Pageantry, the Civic Masque or Drama, like many other forms of the newer arts, was shelved for the greatest drama the world has ever beheld.

Now, with the crash of battle over, with ideas of equality and democracy taking root, with the feeling emanating from man to man of a closer relationship to one another, with the community itself, closer knit, the ties of race and creed almost entirely gone because of the purge of fire that devastated Europe, and purged

the world of the hypocrisies and petty animosities that so long held us in thrall, today marks the awakening of a new spirit. It is the beginning of a new dawn. The old ideas are being swept away, and we are looking upon one another in a new light. We behold in our neighbor a kindlier visage, we see in our own views of the world, a more ethical aspect. We are beginning to have a greater pride in our own community, (the Liberty Loan and other drives stimulated that), we are more anxious to become workers for the Goal of Things Worth While, and Pageantry, or the Community Masque and Drama, will truly have an awakening that will make this form of civic expression as powerful an influence as our newspapers and our current literature; for Pageantry is a form of expression that lends itself to the entire community.

To know that a whole community can give expression to its deepest feelings of joy and pride in itself and its nation; to be able to see history repeating itself in all the glamor and splendor of the past, by the unfolding, in a gigantic drama, of all the main chapters of the past with their promise of the future, gives us, in Pageantry, a form of expression that leaves a monument erected in the memory, which lives as though it were carved in stone.

The VICTORY PAGEANT is written with such an intent. In showing the world-old struggle between the forces of Light and Darkness, it proves to enlightened mankind that the everlasting struggle has not been in vain; that those who have gone before have not died

in vain; that our nation is truly the torch-bearer of light in all its multitudinous meanings. To show with what beauty and power a community, with its environments, no matter how small or how large, can lend itself to such an expression, is the purpose of THE VICTORY PAGEANT or PAGEANT of LIGHT.

Foreword

The pageant will convey, in a series of moving epochs and scenes, the world-old struggle between light and darkness. LIGHT, symbolic of justice, freedom, truth, everything that light conveys to the minds of the free men and women. DARKNESS, that great spirit of evil which has so often engulfed the world in despair, drenched it in blood, hurled civilization back into the dark ages, and stopped the progress of light.

The principal figures in the pageant are: LIGHT, a woman dressed in the white garments of a nun, DARKNESS, the figure of a half-human, half-ape man, who personifies autocracy, hate, malice and envy working on the minds of the weak, berating, cajoling even the strong until he has won their confidence, and even they become the tools of his hellish machinations. These two figures begin with creation and carry their struggles down to the present day, each one for a time holding his sway over the world and then losing in the struggle while the other ascends to power.

Staging

The pageant is staged indoors on a huge stage. The entire rear of the stage and one half of the depth is covered by a drab cyclorama which takes the place of all rear wings and the back drop. It is lighted by a number of small flood lights set at an angle around the base of the cyclorama. Colored gelatine slides are used with these lights to get any shade or tinge to the cyclorama, such as a rosy dawn, suggestive of the coming day. Against this background there are placed set rows or profiles of buildings, etc. Most of the scenic

effects will be produced by lights. Also, against this background the larger tableaux, massed formations in themselves scenic effects, will take place. About half stage are two black drapes at right and left, which will mask one half of the width for smaller tableaux. About one-quarter stage a full black drape will be used for such scenes as do not require full stage room. The entire stage will be lighted by flood lights from the balcony, the color schemes being worked out with colored slides.

The pageant may also, and much more effectively, be staged outdoors. A natural amphitheatre should be used having trees or shrubbery at the rear of the stage, against which natural background can be placed the profiled sets.

Cast

The entire cast takes from one hundred fifty to five hundred people according to the size of the community presenting the pageant. In the first scene for instance, the number of children may be anywhere from twenty to one hundred. If possible the largest numbers should be used in all cases to make the scenes most effective.

All the parts with the possible exception of the figure of DARKNESS may be taken by amateurs, the success of the pageant depending more on skillful direction than on the histrionic ability of the individual actors.

Music

The music of the pageant is produced by an orchestra of symphonic capacity.

The score is arranged to completely synthetize with the dramatic and scenic actions, producing mood and atmosphere throughout the entire performance. The large orchestra is the VOICE of the pageant, creating the deepest appreciation of the stage pictures.

Dances

The dances, done mostly by children, are descriptive interpretations and chiefly chorus numbers.

Speaking Parts

The speaking parts are few, mostly composed of soliloquies.

Epoch I

Light and Darkness

Scene 1. (Full Stage) The Dawn

As the curtain rises, the stage is in absolute darkness and a voice is heard calling—"And there shall be light, and there was light." A faint glow is seen at the center of the cyclorama, and as the light becomes stronger, we see the figure of LIGHT holding aloft a crystal ball. The cyclorama takes on a rosy hue, suggesting coming day. The stage is being lighted by the floods from the balcony. In front of the figure of light are rows of children kneeling on the stage. They are covered by black drapes. As the light broadens, the children turn these drapes inside out, and they are white. As they rise, they hold the white drapes in front of them. When the full stage is fully lighted, we find a suggestion of light as personified in these smiling, childish faces.

Into this symbolic tableau of light, come the figures of ADAM and EVE, untouched and unsullied as yet by worldly wisdom. Suddenly, off stage, is heard a faint rumble, like thunder in the distance. All faces turn toward the sound with a look divided between consternation and fear. There bursts upon this group the figure of the half-man, half-ape, a hideous smirk upon his face. In his hand he holds an apple. He advances toward ADAM and EVE, and offers them the

apple. ADAM turns away. EVE looks at the apple with an appraising eye. ADAM has turned his head aside. EVE takes the apple and offers it to ADAM. He refuses at first, but finally takes it and raises it to his lips. As he does, there is a crash, and all is darkness.

Scene 2. (Quarter Stage) Cain and Abel

CAIN, under the taunts of the spirit of EVIL, slays ABEL, and stands aghast at his crime, as the figure of DARKNESS, with a smirk upon his face, steals off stage.

Epoch II

Old World Conquerors

Scene 1. (Full Stage) Alexander the Great

To the right stands a set piece of a Babylonian tower, to the left stand sets of two massive columns. The cyclorama is an azure blue, the entire stage is flooded with an orange cast from the floodlights. Standing between the tower and the columns, are twelve to fifteen girls dressed in Babylonian costumes. They first stand in frieze pose, then go thru a Babylonian dance. After they exit, two Grecian soldiers enter.

First Soldier—"Hast heard the news?"

Second Soldier—"Nay." (pause) "Surely naught has befallen Alexander?" (with restraint).

First Soldier—"Yea, alas, Alexander is no more."

Second Soldier—"So even he, the mighty Alexander must give way to the elements, he that e'en conquered the Gordian Knot, unconquerable before all, must be conquered by Him that **is** unconquerable."

First Soldier—"Yea, even, even so." (bows).

Scene 2. (Quarter Stage) Julius Caesar

As curtain rises, we hear the music of heraldry horns. Then enter from right and left on stage, two heralds, who face the audience at their respective entrances. We hear sounds of cheering from left on

stage, and the procession of CAESAR enters. First, two banner-bearers, bearing the banners of the house of CAESAR, who dress stage at the center; then two Roman soldiers, followed by CAESAR, Anthony, Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius and Casca.

Caesar— Calpurnia!

Cassius— Peace, ho! CAESAR speaks!

Caesar— Calpurnia!

Calpurnia— Here, my lord.

Caesar— Stand you directly in Anthony's way,
when he doth run his course, An-
tonius!

Antonius— CAESAR, my lord!

Caesar— Forget not in your speed, Antonius, to
touch Calpurnia, for our elders say
the barren, touched in this holy
chase, shake off their sterile curse.

Antonius— I shall remember; when CAESAR
says, "Do this," it is performed.

Caesar— Set on, and leave no ceremony out.

Soothsayer CAESAR!

Caesar— Ha! who calls?

Casca— Bid every voice be still. Peace ye
again.

Caesar— Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue shriller than all

music, cry—"CAESAR!" "CAESAR!" Speak, CAESAR is turned to hear.

Soothsayer— Beware the Ides of March!

Caesar— What man is that?

Brutus— A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March.

Caesar— Let him before me, let me see his face.

Cassius— Fellow, come from the throng. Look upon CAESAR!

Caesar— What sayest thou to me now? Speak once again!

Soothsayer— Beware the Ides of March!

Caesar— He is a dreamer—let us leave him.

(From Scene 2, Act I, Shakespear's Julius Caesar.)

They exit in the formation in which they entered.

Scene 3. (Half Stage) Napoleon

This shows a scene amidships. NAPOLEON stands looking out upon the sea, his dream of WORLD EMPIRE gone. Behind him stand two officers of the British navy of that period.

Epoch III

The Dream of World—Conquest

Scene 1. (Full Stage) The German War Machine

In the center of the stage, against a background of azure-blue, stands a chariot, heavily built, with great spokes in the wheels, and a heavy body to the car. Chained to each other, then chained to the tongue of the car, are some thirty or forty German soldiers who, in turn, are held in leash by reins in the hands of the KAISER, who stands proudly in the car. Behind him, stand the figures of the Crown Prince and Von Hindenburg. Although their faces represent the faces of human beings, they are also made up to represent the face of the animal which seems to possess their individual character—such as—The KAISER, the wild boar, etc. In the car is the figure of the spirit of DARKNESS. He is whispering in the ear of the KAISER. Suddenly the KAISER cracks his whip and with a crash and a grinding of wheels, the great German war-machine goes forth.

Scene 2. (Quarter Stage) The Storm Breaks

As the curtain rises, we see the figure of Pan dressed in the garments of a faun. He sings, "The Flower Garden Ball", and as each flower is mentioned, a child dressed in garments to represent that flower, enters and takes its place in the formation, until the stage is apparently filled with flowers in full bloom, about late summer. Then, from right and left on the stage two children dressed as butterflies enter, who do a dance

among these flowers. As the dance is finished, we hear the dim booming of cannon, and the stage is dimmed as the figure of MARS enters. The children begin nodding their heads, the butterflies fold their wings, the flowers droop and fall, and MARS advances to the center of the stage, and holds aloft his arms. There is a crash, and the lights are out.

Epoch IV

Despolitation

Scene 1. (Full Stage) Belgium Attacked

The cyclorama is colored an azure blue. The set pieces show a Belgium farm, the house, the barns. Beside the stone wall are seated an aged couple, peacefully talking. Their son, the apparent owner of the farm, stands leaning on his rake. It is Angelus time and the farmer and his wife, who has been tending to her plants, turn their thoughts to their boy who has been a wanderer for years. A farm hand is sharpening his scythe. A milk maid is carrying the evening's milk into the house. Two younger children are playing about. All that is needed to make the scene one of absolute contentment is the return of the wandering son.

Off stage is heard a faint whistling which proves to be La Brabanconne, the Belgian Folk Song. The mother listens, recognizes the voice and turns with outstretched arms as her beloved son enters and embraces her. The boy then greets, less demonstratively, his father while his mother wipes away her tears. The grandparents come forward and the younger brother and sister, rather embarrassed, join in the greeting. The whole group crowd about him while he recites his adventures. At this moment the youth's boyhood sweetheart enters with her arms full of flowers. She catches sight of her lover and an involuntary cry of joy escapes her. Then, as tho feeling herself to be an intruder, she starts to turn away. The father turns and sees the girl

standing outside the group of happy folk. He rushes to her, takes her hand, and leads her, while she bashfully protests, to his son. As the two sweethearts greet each other the rest of the family draw back to leave the couple alone in their happiness.

Suddenly a deep rumbling is heard off stage. All turn in surprise. The cyclorama is turning red. The rumbling becomes a heavy booming. The grinding of wheels and noise of cannon is heard. As the women scream and the men stand as if to defend their homes the great German War Machine crashes into peaceful Belgium.

Scene 2. (Quarter Stage) Devastated Belgium

The stage is draped in black. The solitary figure of PLEADING BELGIUM appears.

Belgium. "Friends of BELGIUM, BELGIUM calls. The Neutrality of BELGIUM has been violated. Our cities devastated by Hun hordes, our women and children maltreated. The blood of BELGIUM, the bonds of humanity call to you. Can you not hear? Answer! Answer! Lest we perish!"

Scene 3. (Full Stage) France Attacked

The scene is laid in the center of a little village of northern France. At the rear of the stage is a set piece of a cathedral. It is fete time, the time of the year when the harvests are gathered and the spirit of festival is strong in the Latin races.



The villagers are gathering and are being welcomed by the Padre with his benevolent smile and his blessing. The young couples enter bedecked with flowers and greet one another in French style by a kiss on each cheek. The air is filled with laughter. Some girls come in alone and are met by their swains who escort them to nooks and corners to tell the old, old story. The older people are met with cries of welcome as they arrive and are led to stone seats about the walls. The square is being rapidly filled when strains of music are heard and the children enter in their best dresses or in the grotesque costume of the carnival. With flowers and wreathes they march onto the stage in a procession, then break into groups and commence dancing with all the joy and abandon of the sunny-natured French.

As the children dance the cyclorama is taking on a tinge of red, foretelling the flames of war which are speedily sweeping toward these happy people, unconscious of the terrible calamity which is about to overtake them. Again the deep rumbling is heard, which increases in volume until the German War Machine dashes into the joyous scene. Belgium's stout resistance is seen by the marks on the men and the chariot. The Padre raises his cross. The women scream and run. The men are cut down by the German officers. A great cry is heard and the cyclorama is a vivid red as the curtain drops.



Epoch V

Europe Aflame

Scene 1. (Full Stage) The Allies

In the center of the stage sits COLUMBIA spinning. She holds the woof in her hand, giving her mind and time to industry. One by one figures dressed in the costumes of and representing the Allies enter. Each is accompanied by men in the uniform of her army and navy. In a short speech each allied nation declares why it is entering the world war, then turns and enters beyond the red cyclorama. COLUMBIA remains seated at her spinning, listening but unconcerned.

FRANCE enters first with a soldier and a sailor and marches to the center of the stage.

France. "Our old enemy, cradled and suckled at the breast of Militarism, hate and intrigue, and blighted with devotion to the belief that "Might is right," has grown to dimensions that makes the world stand aghast, and with the sword of murder in one hand, and in the other the flaming brand of destruction, goes forth to impress her stamp upon the free peoples of the world. FRANCE can do no other; she will give all, all in man-power, all in wealth, all in devotion, that they shall not pass thru our beloved country. They shall not pass! Vive la FRANCE! Vive les Allies!"

FRANCE marches toward the rear of the stage and passes thru center of the cyclorama.

GREAT BRITAIN enters second, with a sailor and an English, Canadian, Australian and an Indian soldier, and marches to the center of the stage.

Great Britain. "As one of the great world powers, my nation has stood for liberty ever since the signing of our own great Magna Charta in 1214. Equally strong has ever been our sense of national honor. Reasons of policy might well keep us out of this war. The cries of bleeding BELGIUM and mutilated FRANCE might fall upon deaf ears, but never has GREAT BRITAIN failed to recognize the sacredness of international treaties. And now, her appeal to Prussian autocracy to spare the world being denied, the Hague councils ignored, her sacred treaties called "scraps of paper," and neutral BELGIUM invaded, British honor calls to her insular manhood and to her children across the seas; and from the remotest corners of the earth, Canada, Australia, South Africa and India, her mighty forces hurriedly assemble and plunge headlong into the fray. Policy, royalty, family ties, treasure, we freely lay upon the altar of national honor."

GREAT BRITAIN marches toward rear of stage and passes thru center of cyclorama.

ITALY enters third with a soldier and sailor, passes to center of stage, salutes by dropping Italian flag, turns and passes thru center of cyclorama.

The other Allies follow.

Scene 2. (Full Stage) The Lusitania

COLUMBIA is again spinning. Brought before her in the arms of a woman representing the sea, is the body of a drowned child. She half turns and sees the symbol of the Lusitania. For a moment she seems horror-stricken, but again returns to her spinning. The center drapes are pulled aside, showing the reddened sky, with smoke-pots burning beside the floods, giving the effect of flame. The German war machine is in the center of the stage, with grinding wheels and stamping feet. The body of the car is covered with dirt and spattered with blood. On the wheels are apparently bodies of the dead. COLUMBIA turns and sees, she drops her woof, turns over the spinning wheel, rises to her feet, draws the sword from her side, and screams.

Epoch VI

America Enters

Scene 1. (Quarter Stage) The Call of America

On one side of the stage is the profile of a city street with various stores and other buildings. On the other side of the stage appears a country lane with a wheat field in the foreground. Dividing the two scenes is a small kiosk or Grecian temple. It is decorated with the insignia of our government. It has two latticed doors which are closed.

On the city street are seen various types of young Americans to be found in any of our large cities. There are the young men about town with their silk hats and afternoon attire, the business men discussing their affairs, the mill workers, the newsboy, the messenger boy, the student, the tough, and the anarchist or Bolchevist soap-box orator harangueing the crowd while the figure of DARKNESS stands behind and whispers in his ear.

In the country scene are the various country youth, the ambitious one and the laggard, the young man at the plow, the boy with a hoe, the boy stealing away to go fishing.

On either side incidents of every-day life occur. A game of dice among the newsboys is interrupted by the strong arm of the law. Street singers perform for us. The Salvation Army Band comes on the scene.

Suddenly on top of the kiosk appears the figure of COLUMBIA, her hair streaming down her back, wild eyed and with sword in hand. The men stop their activities in city and country, turn toward COLUMBIA and stand looking at her with the respect and reverence every American feels when the symbol of his beloved democracy appears.

Columbia. "Sons of America, we are now about to accept the gage of battle from this natural foe to liberty, and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its powers.

"This is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination.

"We will not choose the path of submission, and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves, are no common wrongs; they cut to the very roots of human life.

"The world must be made safe for democracy. To such a task we dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are, and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other. America calls."—
(From speech of President Wilson.)

As COLUMBIA'S speech is concluded the young men begin trooping thru the now open doors of the kiosk. Some enter bravely, some brazenly, some hesitatingly, some are pulled thru by others. The last to enter is a handsome, tall, young man who is with a little old lady, his mother. Hand in hand they walk to the doors of the kiosk. He looks a question at her. She nods her head. The boy passes thru the doors leaving his mother with hands outstretched looking dumbly up at Columbia.

Scene 2. (Full Stage) The Answer

The kiosk is in the center of the stage. About it in a group of triangular form are a large number of American soldiers in full equipment, with rifles at the port. The men are marking time as tho marching out of the kiosk, the finished product of the draft, with the flaming curtain in the rear suggestive of the war. The kiosk seems moving thru the men who mask in at the sides, and it appears that the figure of COLUMBIA on the kiosk, sword in hand, is flying over the heads of her soldiers, leading them on to victory.

Scene 3. (Quarter Stage) Victory

The figure of VICTORY holds the crown of victory, after which there is the dance of victory about her by five or ten girls.

Epoch VII

Light Dominates

(Full Stage)

The sky is still red, but changing into a pink. To the right of the stage stands the figure of LIGHT on a pedestal. About her are grouped the Allies. To the left of the stage on a pedestal stands the figure of DARKNESS. He holds aloft the unchristian, blood-stained scimitar. About him stand the figures of the great German war machine, the Kaiser and his disciples. Suddenly, at the base of the cyclorama begins dimly to radiate the figure of a star, the star of hope. As it rises higher in the heavens and it shines with an added brilliancy, we hear the prophetic words:

"A day shall come when ye shall beat your swords into plowshares, and your spears into pruning-forks, and no one shall lift a sword against another; neither shall ye learn any more war; with righteousness shall ye judge the poor, and with equity reprove the meek of the earth. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The calf and the young lion and the fatling shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them. Ye shall not hurt or destroy, for the earth shall be as full of knowledge as the waters cover the sea; therefore, my brethren, have hope, faith and charity."

The star has reached the center of the cyclorama, in full radiance and brilliancy. There is a crash. The half-ape, half-man falls, and with him the entire Ger-

man war machine seems to crumble and fall. From right and left onto the stage dance the children with their white dresses, masking the chariot and the figures of the German war machine. The cyclorama is again the rosy hue of dawn. The stage is filled with light, and we hear an invisible choir singing the song of thanksgiving.

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